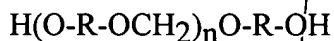


11. (Twice Amended) The hydrolyzable prepolymer of claim 21, having a functionality of from about 1.7 to about 2.3.

21. (Once Amended) A hydrolyzable prepolymer for explosive and propellant compositions, comprising the general formula



wherein R extends in a linear manner or a linear and branched manner and contains carbon atoms and hydrogen atoms or carbon atoms, oxygen atoms, and hydrogen atoms single bonded to each other;

wherein n is a numeral ranging from about 1 to about 20; and,

wherein the $-\text{O}-\text{CH}_2-\text{O}-$ within the backbone of the prepolymer consists essentially of a hydrolyzable moiety, being hydrolyzable at room temperature using an acid having a concentration of from about 2.0 N or less.

✓ Please cancel claims 3-9, 12, and 22-30 without prejudice.

REMARKS

Claim 21 has been amended to address indefiniteness problems and define the invention more precisely. Claims 10 and 11 have been amended to address indefiniteness problems.

Claims 3-8, 11-12, 21-23, and 26-28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or in the alternative under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over each of Kim et al., Barnes et al., Adolph et al. '397, Hostettler, Genz et al., and Okita et al. Claims 3-8, 10-12, 21-24, 26-28, and 30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being unpatentable over

Emmerling et al., in view of Hostetter et al., Okita et al., and Genz et al. Finally, claims 3-8, 10-12, 21-24, 26-28, and 30 stand rejected 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite.

Claim 21 has been amended to more specifically define the invention. Specifically, the term "comprises" has been replaced with the term "consisting essentially of" in reference to the -O-CH₂-O- group within the backbone to more clearly define the location of the group and other associated groups and elements within the composition. R has been more specifically defined indicating that R is non-cyclical (linear or linear/branched) and contains only single bonded carbon and hydrogen atoms or carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen atoms. This clarification also indicates that R does not contain any electron withdrawing groups that are non-hydrophilic (such as nitro groups or flourine groups) that would prohibit hydrolyzing a polymer under normal conditions. This amendment also indicates that other groups are excluded that would interfere with hydrolysis under normal conditions, such the acetylene group (triple bonded alkyne) that would react with acids. This is further explained in the attached Declaration submitted with this repsonse. Because the amended language would preclude groups such as those noted above, therefore, the amended claims should now overcome anticipation or obviousness rejections because none of the references deal with the hydrolyzability issue. Finally, claim 21 was amended to indicate the conditions under which the invention is hydrolyzable to exclude extreme conditions that could potentially make almost any substance hydrolyzable.

Regarding the indefiniteness rejections, applicant has amended claim 21 to more carefully define R, as noted above, and amended claims 10 and 11 to remove the term "comprise". These amendments should address the indefiniteness problems noted by the examiner.

Accordingly, applicant believes that claims 10, 11, and 21 are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests the examiner to withdraw all objections and rejections and allow said claims. Should the examiner need more information regarding this matter or have further suggestions regarding this application, feel free to call the undersigned at 301-744-6668.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Homer, Reg. No. 41,848
Attorney for Applicants

OFFICE OF COUNSEL, CODE OC4
NAVAL SURFACE WARFARE CENTER
INDIAN HEAD DIVISION
101 STRAUSS AVE., BLDG. D-326
INDIAN HEAD, MD 20640-5035

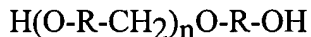
Marked-Up VersionIn The Claims

Please replace the below identified claims with the following:

10. (Twice Amended) The [degradable] hydrolyzable prepolymer of claim 21, wherein the prepolymer [comprises] is poly(polycaprolactone-500 diol formal) having a polycaprolactone component with a molecular weight of about 500.

11. (Twice Amended) The [degradable] hydrolyzable prepolymer of claim 21, [wherein the prepolymer comprises] having a functionality of from about 1.7 to about 2.3.

21. (Once Amended) A [degradable] hydrolyzable prepolymer for explosive and propellant compositions, comprising the general formula



wherein R [comprises a carbon or carbon/heteroatom chain] extends in a linear manner or a linear and branched manner and contains carbon atoms and hydrogen atoms or carbon atoms, oxygen atoms, and hydrogen atoms single bonded to each other;

wherein n is a numeral ranging from about 1 to about 20; and,

wherein the -O-CH₂-O- [linkage] within the backbone of the prepolymer [comprises] consists essentially of a hydrolyzable moiety, being hydrolyzable at room temperature using an acid having a concentration of from about 2.0 N or less.